



Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

Update - October 2003

In April and May of 1978, 349 people attended a series of nine planning meetings in north central Montana concerning the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. They discussed the use of motorized boats on the river, the need for “appropriate” access to the river corridor and keeping the area “as it is.”

In July of 2003, 349 people attended a series of 11 alternative development workshops in north central Montana concerning the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. They discussed the use of motorized boats on the river, the need for “appropriate” access to the monument, and keeping the area “as it is.” The public’s list of high priority topics during this latest round of workshops also included the use of airstrips, natural gas development, livestock grazing, and wildlife management within the monument

While not everyone can agree on the details of how to manage this monument, many of us can agree that this monument is a unique area, and that there are some common topics we all feel strongly about.

During the last series of workshops, we were soliciting ideas to use as building blocks for draft alternatives. During the July workshops, we received over 450 management idea cards, each containing at least one idea, comment or concern. Since the workshops, we’ve received over 7,100 letters and e-mails.

We’ve been pouring over each of these cards, letters and e-mails to pull out substantive ideas that will help us form draft alternatives for analysis. We’re looking for information or ideas that we don’t already have. What do the cards, letters and e-mails provide that can help create draft alternatives?

Our planning team is building alternatives based on these ideas. It’s a difficult process. The draft environmental impact statement will present a range of alternatives for managing this monument. It’s fairly easy to identify the ideas that form the bookends for each alternative; the high or low or maximum or minimum option. However, defining the management options that form the middle range of an alternative requires specific ideas from the public and detailed work from planning team members. We’ll continue developing draft alternatives through the fall.

Sincerely

Gary Slagel

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